

**INTRO**

- Tell of a time you experienced homesickness.
- Do you ever feel like God is out of touch or out of control given the state of our world? How do you maintain faith in a world that often seems so broken?

Daniel recounts how God guided him and his friends to positions of influence in Babylon, the place of exile.

The central theme throughout the book of Daniel is God's sovereignty over history and earthly empires. It also gives an example of what faithful living in exile looks like, and how God's people can maintain hope and perseverance even amidst the most hostile circumstances.

**READ**

Daniel 1:1-21

**REFLECT**

Through Daniel, we see God give us our motive and model for faithful living in exile.

**MOTIVE: God sovereignly gives us what we need when we need it, even in exile.**

3 times in Dan 1 it tells us "God gave" (v2, 7,19). The book of Daniel was written to comfort and encourage God's people in exile with this good news: Our God reigns. He has not been conquered by The Babylonian gods. No matter how things around us appear, whatever the circumstances, our God reigns. And he is working out his purposes.

*Qu: How does this outlook help us have hope and faith?*

**MODEL: What does it look like for God's people to faithfully live in exile (or in a culture where they are a minority)?**

Consider how King Nebuchadnezzar began indoctrinating Daniel and friends to the Babylonian way: changed their names, enrolled them to learn the language and culture, and changed their diet.

*Qu: In what ways does the culture around us "disciple" us?*

Daniel and friends don't assimilate (fully absorb into the surrounding culture) nor separate from the Babylonian culture. Rather, they **INCARNATE** - they find a way to embody their faith and beliefs *within* the culture.

This is a great model for Christians trying to practice their faith in a post-christian culture (see Jer 29:1-14 for more ways God encourages his people living in exile).

There is good reason to have hope in our beautiful and broken world: Our God reigns. He is working out his purposes. In the end, he will set things right. He will bring us home, home from exile. He has given proof of this, not simply by guiding Daniel to a position of power in exile. "He has given proof of this," the Bible says, "by raising Jesus from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

**RESPOND & PRAY**

- What was most encouraging and challenging with today's discussion?
- In what way/s does Daniel's story in Babylon have relevance for us in Toronto?
- Practically speaking, how can we avoid both assimilating and separating from our culture, and instead look to a model of incarnation?
- Pray for one another.
- Pray for others (bring out your PEBCI card and pray for those on the card)